

Twisp Wastewater Infrastructure Needs



Figure 1: The Town of Twisp is located in Okanogan County in north central Washington.

More information

Ecology spoke with the Town of Twisp to gather a representative example of small community wastewater infrastructure needs. Twisp is a self-described small town, with a low median household income, and large infrastructure needs.

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ADA Accessibility

To request an ADA accommodation, contact Emma Hanson (details above), or visit <https://ecology.wa.gov/accessibility> for relay service or TTY call 711 or (877) 833-6341.

Community vision

The Town of Twisp, with an estimated population of 985, is currently experiencing a building boom, more so than most towns in Okanogan County.

Twisp's industries include manufacturing, construction, services, and most recently art. Historically a logging and mill town, the timber industry all but closed in the early 1990s and the community has turned to artists and creative endeavors for additional commerce.

The Town's vision for the community is sustainable growth, economic vitality, opportunities for manufacturing and business, and environmental resiliency. Economic revitalization and sustainability is paramount and at the core of all planning, development and infrastructure projects in Twisp.

Existing wastewater infrastructure

The Town's wastewater system, constructed in 1976, is currently experiencing issues:

- The collection system is failing resulting in raw sewage leaks and backup of residential sewer services. These failures are caused by cracked and broken sewer pipes, root intrusion, displaced joints, and leaking manholes. Sewer backups can also result in overflows to the Twisp and Methow Rivers, impacting water quality and public health.
- The wastewater treatment facility has operational issues due to limited biosolids storage.

The Town's general sewer plan was approved in 2019 and prioritizes improvements that efficiently provide water quality benefits to the Methow River. This plan identified needed improvements to the collection system, lift stations, and biosolids. The Town will begin construction of these improvement in 2021, with funding from the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) and the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA).

Needed wastewater infrastructure

The Town is actively drafting a wastewater treatment plant plan, and in 2021 will be looking for funding from the Ecology, CDBG, and USDA for the design and construction of wastewater facility improvements. The design portion has an estimated cost of \$1.7 million, and the construction has an estimated cost of \$6 million. These improvements; including relocating the treatment plant's outfall, could cost up to \$8 million. The Town wants to begin construction of these improvements in 2022.

Fiscal standing

Debt

The Town will be soon begin paying off an \$110,000 Ecology loan that was used to fund the development of the 2019 general sewer plan.

The Town anticipates a debt of \$915,000 to CDBG and USDA for the design and construction for collection system, lift station, and biosolids improvements. The anticipated annual payment will be about \$44,000.

Funding sources

The Town plans to utilize their public works trust fund and Ecology funding to complete wastewater infrastructure projects. The Town's sewer capital reserves are about \$300,000.

The current sewer rate is about \$60 per month. In the past, rate increases were inconsistent and not tied to anything in particular. Recently, rates have consistently increased, related to inflation and operations and maintenance. Sewer rates have gone up about 30% in the past five years, and rate payers can't afford to pay any more. Twisp has a small number of rate payers and their median household income is about \$30,000.

Public involvement

The Town has held many public meetings over the past four years to discuss all of the wastewater infrastructure challenges.